

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 COLOMBO 1142

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AMGT, PFOR, CE

SUBJ: ANNUAL POLICY AND RESOURCE ASSESSMENT - SRI LANKA - PART I

REF: A. STATE 038356; B. STATE 038338; C. STATE 049794;
D. STATE 051891

1.A. U.S. INTERESTS

MOVING FROM THE GENERAL TO THE SPECIFIC, U.S. INTERESTS
IN SRI LANKA EMBRACE THE FOLLOWING:
- CONTINUING NEUTRALITY OF SRI LANKA, AND INDEED OF THE
WHOLE SOUTH ASIAN AREA, WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF LIMITED MAJOR
POWER INVOLVEMENT; THIS WOULD INCLUDE THE FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION
IN THE SURROUNDING INDIAN OCEAN AREA AND REASONABLE ACCESS TO
SRI LANKAN PORTS FOR US NAVAL, AS WELL AS MERCHANT, VELLELS;
- CONTINUED INTERNAL POLITICAL STABILITY, WITH A GOVERN-
MENT DEDICATED TO DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND TO MAXIMUM CON-
SIDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS;
- TO THE EXTENT THAT SRI LANKA CONTINUES TO PLAY AN ACTIVE
ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY RATHER
OUT OF PROPORTION TO ITS SIZE AND IMPORTANCE, THAT THAT ROLE
ESSENTIALLY BE EXERCISED IN THE DIRECTION OF POLITICAL AND
ECONOMIC MODERATION;

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- RECOGNIZING SRI LANKA'S POORLY DEVELOPED AGRICULTURAL,
INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL ECONOMY, AND ITS INEVITABLE CON-
TINUING SERIOUS BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PROBLEMS AND POOR DEBT-
SERVICE RATIO (DESPITE THE CURRENT WHIMSICAL AND DOUBTLESS
TRANSITORY REVALUATION OF THE RUPEE), CONTINUED MODEST AMERICAN
ASSISTANCE TOWARDS A RATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM;
- CONTINUED ACCESS TO SRI LANKAN TERRITORY FOR VOA RELAY

FACILITIES.

2.B. OVERVIEW

THE PAST SEVEN YEARS OF THE BANDARANAIKE GOVERNMENT HAVE SEEN A GRADUAL, UNSPECTACULAR, BUT DEFINITE OVER-ALL IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL REALTIONS, WITH REASONABLE U.S. SUCCESS IN PROTECTING THE ABOVE INTERESTS AND MEETING THESE STATED OBJECTIVES. THAT PERIOD IS ALMOST OVER, WITH THE FIRST NATIONAL ELECTION IN SEVEN YEARS DUE TO TAKE PLACE BY SEPTEMBER. AT THIS POINT, EITHER A UNP OR AN SLFP GOVERNMENT WITH A VERY SLIM MAJORITY SEEMS THE MOST LIKELY RESULT. A UNP GOVERNMENT, EVEN WITH A SMALL MAJORITY, WOULD PROBABLY GO IT ALONE, WHILE AN SLFP ONE MIGHT FORM SOME TYPE OF COALITION WITH LEFT-OF-CENTER SMALL FACTIONS, OR EVEN WITH THE BLOC OF TAMIL DEPUTIES WHO HAVE USUALLY BEEN EXCLUDED FROM THE GOVERNMENTAL PROCESS. A SOLE UNP GOVERNMENT MAY WELL BE A WEAK ONE, FOCUSING INITIALLY ON SETTLING POLITICAL SCORES, DIVIDING POLITICAL SPOILS, AND SOLVING LEADERSHIP SQUABBLES WITHIN THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT. IT IS HARDLY LIKELY TO MAKE ANY SERIOUS EFFORT TO REVERSE THE STEADY DRIFT TOWARD AN INCREASINGLY STATE CAPITALIST SYSTEM; NOR IS IT LIKELY TO UNDERTAKE ANY SERIOUS FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES. AN SLFP-LED COALITION GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO BE EQUALLY PREOCCUPIED WITH SURVIVAL. EITHER WOULD FACE MUCH HARASSMENT FROM LEFT-LED LABOR UNIONS.

3. ALTHOUGH, LOKE MOST LDCS, SRI LANKA'S MAJOR ECONOMIC PROBLEM IS UNEMPLOYMENT, EXACERBATED BY A LACK OF PRODUCTIVE INVESTMENT AND A SQUANDERING OF RESOURCES WHICH SHOULD BE APPLIED TO DEVELOPMENT UPON POLITICALLY MOTIVATED SCHEMES AIMING AT

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MOMENTARY INCREASES IN CONSUMPTION, IT DOES NOT SEEM LIKELY THAT THIS TREND WILL BE REVERSED WITHIN THE NEXT YEAR OR TWO, SHORT OF SOME SEVERE EXTERNAL PRESSURE OR A BASIC CHANGE IN GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM. NO RECENT GOVERNMENT HAS ACCOMPLISHED MUCH IN EFFORTS TO INCREASE FOOD PRODUCTION, AND IN FACT IMPORTS OF RICE AND FLOUR HAVE INCREASED DRASTICALLY. THE PLANNING FUNCTION HAS BEEN ALMOST NONEXISTENT UNDER THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT; THERE IS NO REASON AT THIS TIME TO FORESEE ANY GREAT IMPROVEMENT UNDER THE NEXT ONE. DESPITE ANNUAL CONFERENCES OF AID DONORS, FOREIGN ASSISTANCE HAS BEEN GENERALLY OFFERED IN DISCRETE AND OFTEN UNRELATED PACKAGES, BASED AS MUCH ON THE DESIRES, CONVENIENCE AND PERCEIVED CAPABILITIES OF THE DONORS AS ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S ASSESSMENT OF ITS NEEDS.

4. WHILE A SUCCESSOR UNP GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE DE JURE TO EXERCISE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT UNTIL THE HAVANA CONFERENCE OF 1979, IT MAY NEITHER DISPLAY THE INTEREST IN DOING SO OF THE PRESENT PRIME MINISTER, NOR BE ACCEPTED BY THE REST OF THE MOVEMENT IN QUITE THE SAME CAPACITY.

SOME OF SRI LANKA'S CURRENT PROMINENT INTERNATIONAL ROLE ALSO
STEMS FROM THE PRESTIGE OF INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY SOON PASS FROM
THE STAGE (SHIRLEY AMERASINGHE, PERHAPS GAMANI COREA). IN
SHORT, THE MODERATING INFLUENCE OF SRI LANKA'S ROLE IN THE
MOVEMENT MAY BE SOMETHING OF A WASTING ASSET.

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5. THE NEXT TWO YEARS OR SO IS LIKELY TO BRING A MOVE TOWARD
THE RIGHT IN GOVERNMENT PHILOSOPH, ALTHOUGH NOT NECESSARILY
WITH ANY GREAT GAIN IN EFFICIENCY OR POPULAR ACCEPTABILITY.
TWO SERIOUS UNDERLYING POLITICAL PROBLEMS WILL COMPLICATE THE
COUNTRY'S EFFORTS TO COPE WITH ITS SERIOUS ECONOMIC ONES.
THESE ARE THE TAMIL MINORITY AND THE UNEMPLOYED YOUTH. AL-
THOUGH BOTH PROBLEMS ARE POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE, THE TAMIL ONE
IS PERHAPS MORE READILY SUSCEPTIBLE TO PALLIATIVE MEASURES,
SINCE A CONFIDENT AND WILLING CENTRAL GOVERNMENT COULD DO A
GOOD DEAL TO MEET SPECIFIC TAMIL GRIEVANCES SHORT OF GRANTING
A SIGNIFICANT DEGREE OF AUTONOMY. PAST LOCAL HISTORY SUGGESTS
THIS TO BE UNLIKELY, UNLESS AND UNTIL THE TAMIL MALCONTENTS PUT
ON MORE PRESSURE THROUGH ISOLATED TERRORISM AND OTHER MORE OR
LESS VIOLENT ACTIVITIES. THE ACTIVISTS ARE, OF COURSE, THE
YOUNGER TAMILS, WHO HAVE MANY OTHER GRIEVANCES, AND IN THIS
SENSE THEIR PROBLEM MERGES INTO THAT OF THE UNEMPLOYED AND
OVER-TRAINED YOUTH OF THE REST OF THE ISLAND. NOT ONLY ARE
THE YOUNG SUSCEPTIBLE TO LEADERSHIP BY THE FAR LEFT (AS IN
1971), BUT MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, PERHAPS, THEY GIVE SIGNS OF
THOROUGH DISENCHANTMENT WITH, AND LACK OF INTEREST IN PRE-
SERVING, A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEM. FAILING ANY REAL
PROGRESS IN DEVELOPMENT AND INCREASING EMPLOYMENT, WHILE
THE NUMBER OF EDUCATED YOUTHS CONTINUES TO MOUNT, THE RESULT
OF THIS GROWING POLITICAL ALIENATION IS PROBLEMATIC. THE

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TIME PERIOD MAY ALSO SEE THE PASSING OF OLD POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, ESPECIALLY IN THE LSSP/CP RANKS, AND A GENERAL RADICALIZATION OF THE LEFT, INCLUDING THE TRADE UNIONS. SOME OF THE NEW LEADERSHIP MAY COME FROM THE RANKS OF THE 1971 INSURGENTS, WHO ARE BECOMING MORE POLITICALLY ACTIVE ON THE LOCAL SCENE. ALL OF THESE FACTORS MAY SERVE TO SHORTEN THE TERM OF A COMPLACENT AND INEFFECTIVE NEXT GOVERNMENT WHICH PERFORMS ALONG THE LINES OF THE PRESENT ONE.

6.C. OBJECTIVES, COURSES OF ACTION AND ISSUES

1. POLITICAL

GIVEN THE RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL OF AMERICAN STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL INTEREST IN SRI LANKA, AND THE UNCERTAINTIES SURROUNDING THE COMING ELECTION RESULTS, ESPECIALLY THE NATURE AND PROBABLE PERFORMANCE OF THE NEXT GOVERNMENT, THIS IS HARDLY A TIME FOR NEW POLITICAL INITIATIVES TOWARD SRI LANKA. THE EMBASSY SHOULD CONTINUE TO OBSERVE AND REPORT DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING THE ELECTION, AND TO CULTIVATE THE NEW LEADERSHIP WHICH EMERGES FROM IT, WHILE NOT NEGLECTING CONTACTS WITH A BROAD SPECTRUM OF OPPOSITION ELEMENTS. AN OUTSTANDING INVITATION TO THE PRESENT PRIME MINISTER FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT, WHICH WAS EXTENDED BY THE FORD ADMINISTRATION, MAY BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE LAPSED, OR AT LEAST TO BE IN LIMBO PENDING THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION. SHOULD MRS. BANDARANAIKE RETAIN OFFICE, THE MATTER MIGHT BE RECONSIDERED IN EARLY 1978. WE SHOULD BE WARY OF ASSUMING A POSTURE OF TOO WARMLY EMBRACING A SUCCESSOR UNP GOVERNMENT, SHOULD ONE RESULT, AS WE HAVE DONE ONCE OR TWICE IN THE PAST. NOR SHOULD WE EQUATE A CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT HERE WITH THE RECENT DRAMATIC ONE IN INDIA; ELECTORAL DEFEATS OF INCUMBENTS ARE THE RULE HERE RATHER THAN THE EXCEPTION. UNFORTUNATELY, PERFORMANCE OF RESULTING GOVERNMENTS, EXCEPT WHEN THEY HAVE DIRECTLY ATTACKED OUR INTERESTS, HAVE BEEN ABOUT THE SAME. IF ANYTHING, UNDER A UNP GOVERNMENT WE SHOULD BE, MORE THAN EVER, THE TARGET OF A DISGRUNTLED LEFT WHICH WILL ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY US AS STRONGLY SUPPORTING A "REACTIONARY" UNP. THERE IS NO PROFIT IN PROVIDING AMMUNITION FOR THIS CHARGE WITH NO

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COMMENSURATE BALANCING ADVANTAGE TO US INTERESTS.

7. OUR DECISIONS CONCERNING THE MILITARY POSTURE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA SHOULD BE TAKEN WITH LITTLE OR NO REFERENCE TO OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SRI LANKA. THIS HAS NOT BEEN, AND SHOULD NOT BE, AN ISSUE OF ANY REAL CONCERN BETWEEN OUR TWO

COUNTRIES. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO STAY IN TOUCH ON MULTI-LATERAL ISSUES, ESPECIALLY THOSE CONCERNING THE THIRD WORLD AND THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT.

8. 2. ECONOMIC/COMMERICAL

WITH CONTINUING NATIONALIZATIONS AND FAILURE TO ADOPT AN ADEQUATE FOREIGN INVESTMENT GUARANTEE LAW, DIRECT INVESTMENT IN SRI LANKA CONTINUES TO BE A HIGH RISK PROPOSITION; THE EMBASSY HAS TAKEN A NEUTRAL VIEW TOWARDS ENCOURAGING AMERICAN BUSINESS IN THIS DIRECTION. WE SHALL CONTINUE TO DO SO UNTIL THERE IS A CHANGE IN THIS SITUATION, WHICH COULD HAPPEN AFTER THE ELECTION, ALTHOUGH ANY SUCH CHANGE IS LIKELY TO BE IN SLOW AND MEASURED STEPS UNDER AN INWARD-LOOKING, TIMID UNP GOVERNMENT. MEANWHILE, WE SHALL HELP REPUTABLE INVESTORS AND URGE THEM TO MAKE THEIR OWN ON-THE-SPOT INVESTIGATIONS, WHILE CONCENTRATING OUR OWN COMMERICAL EFFORTS ON PROMOTING THE SALE OF US GOODS AND SERVICES IN SRI LANKA'S VERY LIMITED MARKET. IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, WE SHOULD EXPRESS SYMPATHY FOR SRI LANKA'S SERIOUS PROBLEMS AS AN MSA, AND GENERALLY SUPPORT ITS EFFORTS TO SEEK FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SUPPORTING EFFORTS OF INTERNATIONAL DONORS TO PROMOTE MORE ECONOMIC REALISM IN SRI LANKA'S INTERNAL POLICIES, ALONG WITH INCREASED ATTENTION TO DEVELOPMENT AS AN OBJECTIVE.

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9. U.S. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

WITH THE VARIOUS OPTIONS OPEN TO US IN THIS FIELD, IT IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT AREA FOR DECISIONS AFFECTING OUR RELATIONS WITH SRI LANKA IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. OUR AID PRESENCE OVER THE PERIODS 1950-52, 1956-63, AND 1966-75 WAS CHARACTERIZED BY PRONOUNCED SWINGS FROM A HIGHLY VISIBLE AND

ACTIVE AID PRESENCE TO PERIODS OF COMPLETE INACTIVITY. TO SOME EXTENT THE FORMER OCCURRED DURING UNP GOVERNMENTS, AND THE LATTER DURING SLFP-LED ONES. WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, THERE IS A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF EXPECTATION IN SRI LANKA THAT WE WILL REPEAT THIS PRACTICE IN THE EVENT OF A UNP VICTORY. I FEEL VERY STRONGLY THAT THIS SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO OCCUR. THE PRINCIPAL CRITERION OF OUR LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE THAT OF THE ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY OF THE COUNTRY AND THE WILLINGNESS OF ITS GOVERNMENT AND POPULATION TO ADOPT POLICIES FAVORABLE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT IN BOTH THESE AREAS, AND WE SHOULD AVOID ANY MARKED INCREASE EITHER IN OUR AID LEVELS OR, ABOVE ALL, IN OUR PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN SRI LANKA UNTIL THE PRESENT SITUATION TAKES A DECIDED TURN FOR THE BETTER. REGRETFULLY, THERE ARE NO CLEAR SIGNS AT THIS POINT THAT IT WILL DO SO.

10. WITHIN THIS PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK, WE SHOULD:

A. CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO SUPPORT THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR,
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ESPECIALLY IN THE DIRECTION OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN FOOD, AT A LEVEL OF \$10 TO \$15 MILLION PER YEAR.

B. URGE ATTENTION TO AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND PLANNING AFTER THE ELECTION, IN COOPERATION WITH THE IBRD AND OTHER DONORS, AND BE RECEPTIVE TO REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPING GREATER CAPABILITY FOR PLANNING.

C. MAINTAIN OUR ANNUAL PL-480 PLANNING FIGURE AT 100,000 TONS, WHILE TAKING A HARDER LOOK AT THE INCENTIVE/DISINCENTIVE EFFECT OF SUCH IMPORTS ON DOMESTIC FOOD PRODUCTION.

D. SEEK WAYS TO EASE THE TERMS OF ASSISTANCE THROUGH LOWER DOWN PAYMENTS, LOWEST POSSIBLE LOAN TERMS, POSSIBLE USE OF PL 480 LOAN FORGIVENESS PROCEDURES, AND INCREASING THE VERY SMALL GRANT PROPORTION OF OUR AID.

E. SEEKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR VESTING GREATER RESPONSIBILITY IN THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT FOR OVER-ALL EFFECTIVE PLANNING, FIXING OF PRIORITIES, SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECTS, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS. THIS INCLUDES MINIMIZING AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, AND IN PARTICULAR HOLDING DOWN THE AMERICAN PHYSICAL PRESENCE, WHETHER IN THE FORM OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OR IN TERMS OF OUR INTERNAL AID MANAGEMENT. THIS MINIMIZING OF OUR PRESENCE AND ACTIVE ROLE IS AS IMPORTANT AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING SRI LANKAN DEVELOPMENT AS IT IS FOR THE POLITICAL REASONS MENTIONED ABOVE.

11. MILITARY

SRI LANKA HAS BEEN RECEPTIVE IN RECENT YEARS TO OUR OCCASIONAL SHIP VISITS, WHICH HAVE BEEN AT THE LEVEL OF THREE TO FOUR ANNUALLY OF ONE OR TWO UNITS EACH. THIS LEVEL OF VISITS SHOULD RESUME FOLLOWING THE ELECTION THIS SUMMER, BARRING ANY UNEXPECTED POST-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS. IF SRI LANKA SHOULD REQUEST

RESUMPTION OF A MODEST LEVEL OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TRAINING, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO RESPOND POSITIVELY; FOR THIS REASON THE MINIMAL LINE ITEM SHOULD BE RETAINED FOR SRI LANKA IN OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE BUDGET.

12. CULTURAL/INFORMATION
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IN ADDITION TO THE USUAL OBJECTIVES OF OUR CULTURAL AND INFORMATION PROGRAMS IN MOST FRIENDLY COUNTRIES, WE HAVE HOPES THAT THE NEXT GOVERNMENT MAY PERMIT DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE OPEN, COMPETENT, HONEST AND LIVELY LOCAL PRESS AND RADIO, PERMITTING THIS INTELLIGENT AND LITERATE PEOPLE ACCESS TO A GREATER NUMBER OF IDEAS AND VIEWPOINTS, INCLUDING OUR OWN. WE SHALL DO ALL WE CAN TO COOPERATE IN SUCH A PROCESS. IN OUR PROGRAMS WE SHALL TRY TO STRESS HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH ARE NOT AT THE MOMENT A PROBLEM IN THIS COUNTRY, IN TERMS OF THE VALUE OF STRONG LEGAL AND GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS AS A BULWARK AGAINST THE EROSION OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES. WE HAVE JUST RENEWED OUR VOA FACILITIES AGREEMENT, IN FORCE SINCE 1952, AND WE SHALL CONTINUE OUR CLOSE COOPERATION IN SRI LANKA'S OPERATION OF THESE FACILITIES TO OUR MUTUAL BENEFIT.
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